(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the seminar held on 'Pesticide Residue in Food Commodities' organized recently;

(b) if so, whether Government have taken note of the observations made in the seminar; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken to ensure that pesticides free food commodities are available?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Government is already advocating need based and judicious use of pesticides through Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programme to ensure that pesticide residues remaining in the crop are either nil within the safe limit. For this purpose, about 600 Farmer Field Schools are organized by 26 Central Integrated Pest Management Centres at different parts of the country in a year. Emphasis is also given for adoption of good agricultural practices by farmers. Government is also promoting the use of natural pesticides, biological control, organic farming and use of safer pesticides. Under the Insecticides Act, 1968, registration of bio-pesticides is encouraged. To develop protocols for safe use of pesticides by recommending good agricultural practices based on multilocational 'supervised field trails' and to monitor pesticides residues in agricultural produce, Ministry of Agriculture through ICAR is already implementing an All India Coordinated Research Project on Pesticides Residues. The research findings on good agricultural practices and the simple methods of decontamination of pesticide residues are promoted through extension machinery.

Pest attack on Bt. cotton

1121. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the pink boll worm is emerging as a major pest in the cotton belt specially in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat;

(b) whether it is a fact that toxin in Bt. cotton is proving to be ineffective against it; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to check the pest attack on Bt. cotton?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir. Pink boll worm has been progressively increasing in the entire South and Central India including Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat during last two to three years.

(b) No, Sir. Bt. cotton is effective in controlling lepidopteran pests including pink bollworm as per the observation made by the Monitoring-cum-Evaluation Committee of DBT, Ministry of Science and Technology.

(c) Question does not arise.

Reforming APMC markets

1122. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated any strategy to reform Agriculture Produce Market Committee markets throughout the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government also propose to bring forward amendments in existing marketing laws and structure;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the other measures proposed to provide legal and administrative support for trade in various agricultural commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Agricultural Marketing Reforms constituted by this Ministry in its report of 28.6.2002 has *inter-alia* recommended that all the State Governments should amend the State Agricultural Produce Marketing Regulations Act (APMC Act) to provide for the following:

(i) Enabling private and cooperative sectors to establish and